

duction of the Bill and it was deemed advisable to show a draft of this measure—which had been prepared under the supervision of the director of the gardens by the Parliamentary draftsman—to the then leader of the Opposition, the present Premier (Hon. Frank Wilson). He concurred. It is not proposed to borrow any additional money under this Bill when it becomes law; at the present time the overdraft is lower than it has been for many years, due partly to the fact of the decreased interest, and partly to the fact also that the director of the gardens, Major Le Soenf, is absent on active service and is not drawing his salary; his work is being done by our friend Hon. Mr. Kingsmill, who is not being paid for that work. The Bill is required simply to put in order the financial affairs of the committee and to fulfil the promise made to the Commonwealth Bank when the adjustment referred to was made. Clauses 3, 4, and 5 provide the machinery for carrying out the provisions of the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 5.8 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 31st October, 1916.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Lands: Report of the Under Secretary for Lands for the year ended 30th June, 1916.

By the Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): State Steamship Service, Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Account for the year ended 30th June, 1916.

By the Attorney General: Amendment of the Bankruptcy Rules.

By the Minister for Works: Amendment of Perth City Council by-laws 9 and 39; Kellerberrin Road Board, new by-law; Uniform by-laws for regulating motor traffic adopted by Corrigin, Dalwallinu, East Avon, Melbourne, and Westonia Road Boards.

ELECTION RETURN—BROWNHILL-IVANHOE.

The SPEAKER announced the return to a writ issued for the election of a member for Brownhill-Ivanhoe, showing that Mr. John Scaddan had been duly elected.

Mr. Scaddan took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

ASSENT TO SUPPLY BILL

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to Supply Bill (No. 2) £648,000.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to inform the House that I presented the Address-in-reply to His Excellency the Governor and I have received the following:—

Mr. Speaker and hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly: In the name and on behalf of His Most Gracious Majesty the King, I thank you for your address. (Signed) Harry Barron, Governor.

QUESTION—ROADS BOARD RATES AND SOLDIERS' HOLDINGS.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has he received a request from the Marradong roads board, asking for an amendment to the Roads Act to give all roads boards discretionary power to waive the rates due on soldiers' holdings, during their absence on active service? 2, Will the Government comply with this patriotic request, by bringing forward this amendment to the Roads Act during this session, if such action is necessary?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Section 240 of the Roads Act gives boards power to write off arrears of rates with the approval of the Minister, and consequently if boards do not collect rates due by soldiers, for the reason that undue hardship would be inflicted, the power to write off can be exercised, but cases should be dealt with on their merits. It is therefore considered that special legislation is unnecessary.

QUESTION—EXPEDITIONARY FORCES, POLICE ENLISTMENTS.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Premier: 1, How many public spirited members of the police force have been compelled to resign from the service, in order to enlist in the Australian Imperial Forces? 2, Will the Government remove the prohibition against the enlistment of police officers, which was imposed by the Scaddan Government? 3, Will the Government keep the positions of those police officers who have resigned to enlist open for them on their return, thereby placing the police in the same position as other State employees?

The PREMIER replied: 1, 46. 2, Members of the police force are not prohibited from enlisting. Those who leave with a good character are informed that it will be necessary to fill their places, but that any man returning physically fit for police duty, and holding a good discharge, will be re-engaged if a vacancy exists at the time. 3, Answered by No. 2.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Treasury Bills Act Amendment.
 - 2, Totalisator Duty Act Amendment.
- Introduced by the Premier.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Western Australian Day Funds (No. 2).
 - 2, Roman Catholic Church Property Acts Amendment.
 - 3, Special Lease (Lake Clifton).
- Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—FRANCHISE.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE (No. 1.)

Report of Committee adopted.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

Mr. SCADDAN (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [4.37]: I desire to inform the House that, after a brief absence from the Chamber, due to various causes, over some of which I had no control and others of my own making, I have returned, and, at the wish of the party on this side of the House, I have taken up the position of leader of the Opposition.

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson--Sussex) [4.38]: Perhaps I may be permitted to congratulate the hon. gentleman on the fact that he has once more taken his seat in this Chamber, and more especially upon the fact that he is once again leader of his party. In doing so I recognise, of

course, that it is his right to create any position that he thinks proper in the political life of this State, although there is always a danger in creating positions of this description. I hope he may be long spared to lead his party through the turmoil of political life, and that he may long occupy the position which he now holds. In doing so I am only reciprocating the compliment which he has extended to me on a previous occasion. I wish to return thanks to the member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson) who, in the absence of Mr. Scaddan, has occupied the position of leader of the Opposition. He has always extended courtesy to me and to my colleagues, and has assisted us to carry on the business of the House.

BILL—SPECIAL LEASE (STIRLING ESTATE).

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore [4.49], in moving the second reading said: The Bill which I am submitting to the House is a double-barrelled one as it provides for a special lease to be granted under the Land Act for a portion of the Stirling Estate for the working of lime deposits and also for an area of the Swan river to be dredged for oyster shell for the purpose of making cement. The question of asking Parliament to agree to this measure has been under the consideration of the previous Government and the matter has been inquired into very carefully for the past 12 months. The Bill provides that the lessee shall be granted an area of 50 acres of the Stirling Estate upon which he shall establish lime works. He proposes to utilise the oyster shell which is to be dredged from the Swan river for the purpose of making Portland cement. Tests have already been made and the fact has been established without a doubt that a very excellent Portland cement can be made from these two products. The importance of establishing Portland cement works in Western Australia and making this a permanent industry is one which I am sure must be appreciated by Parliament, because anything that will tend to foster the natural resources of Western Australia will meet with the

approval of this House. Cement is largely used by the Government, and if the Government are able to purchase it in Western Australia there will thus be saved considerable expense in duty and freight, and, moreover, it will be a very great advantage to private individuals also to be able to purchase the locally made product. As I have said, to enable this object to be carried out, an area of 50 acres has been granted. The lithograph which I have here, and which I propose to lay on the Table of the House, shows the position of the area. It was excluded from the tuart reserve by the Permanent Reserves Act, 1915, with the view of this special lease being granted; for, as I have already stated, the question of granting the lease has been under consideration for some time. The Bill provides that a rental of £50 per annum for 21 years shall be paid. The land is required to work limestone deposits comprised in the area and for the manufacture of lime for agricultural purposes and, as I have said, for cement. The lessee is to spend £10,000 upon this property within one year of the commencement of the lease and a further sum of £10,000 in the following two years. Of the total output of the lime which will be produced from this area, one-half of the ground limestone containing not less than 80 per cent. carbonate of lime is to be supplied to the public for agricultural purposes at a price not to exceed 12s. per ton. It is, moreover, provided that it must be pulverised and sufficiently fine to pass through a 40-inch mesh. The price at which this lime shall be sold is the same as has been provided in the Bill I submitted to the House for enabling the lime deposits to be worked at Lake Clifton, namely, 12s. a ton. In addition to providing one-half the output for agricultural purposes, it is set out that the lessee shall, if so required, provide lime for other purposes, building, if necessary, but as hon. members will know, the amount which will be required for building will be small. The lease further provides for permission to be given to the lessee to construct a railway from the land so leased to the Capel station. For the information of members I may say that Capel is between Bunbury and Busselton, and the block of 50 acres in question is about 2½ miles from the station of Capel. The

position of the proposed railway is shown on the litho which I am laying on the Table. It is provided that a strip of land, one chain wide where the railway is passing over Crown lands, shall be reserved and demised to the lessee, and that a strip, one chain wide, through alienated lands shall be acquired by the Government, the lessee to pay the cost of such acquisition and also demised to the lessee without additional rent. The Minister for Lands may make by-laws for the regulation of the traffic on the railway and the Minister has power to provide that, if the public require it, passengers, goods, and freight shall be carried on this railway. The second part of the Bill provides for the granting of a license of 50 acres for the dredging for shell in the Swan river.

Mr. Angwin: What is he paying for the shell?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A royalty of 5d. a ton. At one time it was proposed to give the lessee the right to go anywhere from Melville Water to Freshwater Bay to dredge for shell, but at the lessee's wish he was granted a certain area, which is described in the schedule of the Bill and which I think is really an advantage, because the Government will be in a position to know exactly where the work is going on, and it will be possible to better regulate the work than would have been the case if that work had been scattered over different parts of the river. Moreover, I understand that the Works Department have been consulted in regard to this matter, and their engineers have reported that it will be an advantage to have the dredging carried out. The shipping people have also been asked to express their views, and they stated that far from there being a likelihood of any interference with traffic on the river the dredging of Melville Water will improve that portion of the estuary by reason of the fact that there will be a greater depth of water after the dredging operations have been completed.

Mr. Smith: Is the lessee going to build his factory on the banks of the river?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He must have a factory somewhere, but I do not think it will be on the banks of the river.

Mr. Angwin: It is going to be, I believe, at Brunswick.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There must be a factory somewhere near coal, I should say, in order to carry on such works as these. A considerable amount of capital will be involved in the undertaking.

Mr. Smith: I want an assurance that there will not be a factory established on the river.

Mr. Angwin: It would be on private land if it were built.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no Government land available there. If the lessee wants to put up cement works in South Perth I do not see that we can object. I have no knowledge as to where the factory is supposed to be, but perhaps I shall be able to inform hon. members later on. I do not believe for a moment that it would be established on the banks of the river, because I do not think that would be a suitable place for such works. Not having been intimate with this question since its initiation, I have not been in a position to be able to gather perhaps as much information with regard to the whole business as my predecessor in office may have done, but it occurred to me that hon. members would like to know exactly where they propose to build this factory. I tried therefore to get all the information I could from the agent of the lessee who resided in Perth, but could not do so because he was out of town at the time I endeavoured to see him.

Mr. Angwin: He told me he thought it would be at Brunswick.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the Bill has been read a second time I think I shall be able to satisfy the mind of the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith) on the subject. It is proposed to grant this license for the term of one year, and the Bill provides that it is renewable year by year for a term of 21 years; that is to say, it is granted for one year but is renewable for 21 years. I am quite sure that hon. members will agree that an industry such as this must be of considerable advantage to Western Australia, and I believe that the principals who are connected with the work are not people of straw or without knowledge, and that they have a considerable amount of capital behind them. The Lands Department have also been informed that the Commonwealth has given its sanction to the flotation of Mr. Scott's company, that is

the company of which Mr. Scott is the principal, with a capital of £75,000, and that Mr. Scott proposes to commence operations forthwith. At any rate we have that assurance, and we have it in writing from Mr. Scott, who is in Adelaide, that he has had authority from the Commonwealth Treasurer for the flotation of his company. He has been able to satisfy the Commonwealth Treasurer—and I believe he is very difficult to satisfy in these days with regard to these matters—that the factory is a bona fide one, and that those connected with it are people who, at any rate, might receive consideration, and who may be reckoned on to carry out the proposal which I now place before Parliament on their behalf. I believe that an industry such as this, which will have for one of its main objects the manufacturing of Portland cement, must be of material advantage to Western Australia, that the more of these industries we get established in Western Australia the better it will be for us, and that the more we can keep our money within our shores for developing our State, instead of having to send out elsewhere to bring in produce for our services here the better off we shall be. I have much pleasure in submitting this measure for the consideration of hon. members, and hope that when we go into Committee I shall be in a position to ease their minds with regard to several matters connected with the Bill. I assure hon. members that the provisions in the Bill have received careful consideration, not only at the hands of the present Government but also at the hands of our predecessors in office. I have every confidence in submitting the Bill for consideration of members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.7]: This Bill is the outcome of a measure which was considered by hon. member's. I think, last session, providing that from what was classified as an "A" reserve an area of land should be taken in order to grant a lease for the project. There is no doubt, as long as the provisions are made secure so that there is no possibility of this special license when granted being turned over to any other company who are getting another special license, it will result in benefit to this State. Only two years ago there

was a great possibility of several thousands of men being thrown out of employment in Western Australia owing to the difficulty of obtaining cement. No cement could be obtained from England or from the Eastern States, and eventually we had to go to Green island, I think somewhere in China, for the purpose of getting cement in order to keep these men in employment.

Mr. Smith: That was a German company, was it not?

Mr. ANGWIN: No it was a British company.

Mr. Smith: With German shareholders.

Mr. ANGWIN: Not according to the agents of the affair.

Mr. Munsie: That was a bogey which the *Sunday Times* dug up.

Mr. ANGWIN: This was the means at that time of keeping several thousands of men in employment who would otherwise have been put out of work. Several gentlemen who understood the position and realised that there was a demand for cement in Western Australia were anxious to start work here. The gentleman mentioned in the Bill, Mr. Henry James Scott, came here with a view to starting cement works such as are provided for under the measure. His intention then was to establish them at South Perth. Eventually, after giving the matter a great deal of consideration, he came to the conclusion, with a view to making the proposition a better paying one than that which he first thought of, that it would be preferable for him to put up manufacturing works at Brunswick, because in the manufacture of this particular article he not only required lime but also a considerable quantity of coal from Collie, and would also require the shell from the river here for the purpose of having proper ingredients for the manufacture of good cement. As Brunswick was somewhere about the centre of his operations he informed me that in all probability the works would be constructed for the manufacture of cement somewhere in the vicinity of that place. I regretted this to a certain extent because I would rather they had been established somewhere on the other side of the river. What we want in this State is cement, and it is our duty, unless the Government can see their way clear to manufacture this article

themselves, to encourage these persons who are willing to erect works for its manufacture and provide the necessary capital for development. It has been proved conclusively that it is for the benefit of the State that we should encourage people of this kind. The other day we agreed to the passing of a Bill for the purpose of allowing another company to manufacture cement. At the time a good deal was said when the Bill was introduced about the value of lime for agriculturists throughout the State. I was under the impression that one of the primary objects in view was the manufacture of cement. By the granting of this lease we shall be able to wipe out a monopoly as far as any other private company is concerned, so long as safeguards are there prohibiting the transfer of this special lease to any company formed later, or the transfer of the lease from one company to another.

Mr. Carpenter: Suppose they combine in regard to the price?

Mr. ANGWIN: So long as we keep this separate and distinct there is a possibility of having fair competition in regard to the manufacture and sale of the article. In normal times we have had to import overseas cement, and we are in a position to make it almost impossible for these companies to combine. We have had the South Australian article, the Victorian, the New Zealand and the English article, and other cements have also come to the Western Australian market.

Mr. Lambert: Victoria cannot supply their own requirements and have never been able to.

Mr. ANGWIN: We have had several thousands of casks of South Australian cement, and it would be very much better for us to manufacture our own rather than send to South Australia for it, or to Green island. There was one shipment of 22,000 casks which came from Green island, which in all probability was manufactured by the Chinese. This was imported owing to the fact that there was no possibility of getting any cement in Australia at the time, or in any other of the British Dominions. We should encourage people to put up works of this class on our own shores, and if we do so it will be a benefit to West-

ern Australia. Every care has been taken with regard to the granting of this special lease. The only difference I see is that a special area has been marked out for the purpose of dredging for shell in the Swan river. I have not seen the plan of that area, but it was understood previously that it should be lodged by the Engineer-in-Chief, so that we could take good care that it would not interfere in any way so far as the river is concerned. There is not the least doubt in my mind that in encouraging these people we will be pursuing a course beneficial to the State generally.

Mr. CARPENTER (Fremantle) [5.16]: There is one point upon which I am not satisfied. This is, apparently, a measure introduced at the behest of a company promoter. That, also, is true of the Bill to which the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) has just referred—a measure that was before this Chamber a few weeks ago for another lease of a similar character. One may, I think, be pardoned for being suspicious of Bills that are put before us for the purpose of giving company promoters the opportunity to take concessions to the market and trade upon them, with the result that that trade may, or may not, be advantageous to the State. This is the point I wish to emphasise: Neither in this Bill, nor in the Bill which we had before us on a previous occasion, is any definite time laid down within which these works shall commence.

Mr. Angwin: Two years.

Mr. CARPENTER: The agreement is not dated. In both cases the dates are left out, and the work has to be started within a certain time after the date of the lease, but we do not know, and the Minister has not informed us, when the lease is to begin. It may be stated that rent has to be paid, but I take it that that will not begin until the lease has been signed. So, we are passing a Bill or are asked to pass a Bill, to give a concession to enable a company promoter to go to the market and to say, "I have got a concession from the Government of Western Australia; I have got a free hand as to when I start operations."

The Minister for Works: He has to spend £10,000 within a year.

Mr. CARPENTER: But when is it to begin?

The Minister for Lands: When the lease is granted.

Mr. CARPENTER: When is that?

The Minister for Works: As soon as the Bill is passed.

Mr. CARPENTER: That is only assumption. There is no time stated in which he shall start operations. So far as I can see, he has five years in which to float his company, and, during that time, anyone else, who may be desirous of entering into the business, is shut out. I wish only to emphasise the point to which I have referred, believing that the Minister would not knowingly give away our rights without some specific understanding as to when the works would commence once the concession is granted.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [5.20]: I do not think the hon. member need have any anxiety in regard to the point to which he has referred. The lease cannot be signed until the Bill is passed; unless the lease is signed, the concession is of no value to this individual in any shape or form. It is provided that he must expend £10,000 within the first 12 months. This sum, and the balance which he has to pay, constitutes in itself a pretty good guarantee.

Mr. Carpenter: When is the lease to begin?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The lease will commence immediately after it is signed. The commencement of any lease dates from the period when it is signed.

Mr. Scaddan: Within 12 months he has to spend £10,000?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. If he does not sign the lease within two or three years it goes by the board. Because the Act is passed, there is no obligation to wait upon a person who will not fulfil his part of the contract.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: There should be a time limit put in.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is useless for a man attempting to float a company unless he has something tangible. He will not have this until the lease is signed. As I have already said, he has to spend £10,000 within the first 12 months. He will have to enter into competition with people working the Lake Clifton deposits, and he

will naturally want to get to work as quickly as possible. The company that can get the lime on the market as soon as possible will have the advantage.

Mr. Carpenter: It does not follow that he will do the work himself.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no hesitation in supporting the measure.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [5.22]: There are one or two points to which I would like to refer in connection with this special lease, and they deal with the consideration of the interests of the agricultural industry. I see that definite provision has been made for the supply of calcium carbonate to the farmer, but I see no stipulation for the supply of burnt lime. That is a significant omission and I would direct the attention of representatives of the agricultural interests to it. I would like to see members secure an adjournment of this debate, in order to allow an opportunity of considering clearly whether the interests in question will be fully conserved under this special Bill. Another noticeable fact is that, although there is a stipulation for the supply of calcium carbonate—and it is not my desire to harass those who establish industries in the State—I think it is well to consider that the deposits of lime in this State are somewhat limited, and that the quality of the lime here is, in many instances, indifferent, and the percentage of calcium carbonate low. We should hesitate, in the circumstances, before we give away valuable known deposits of this description. If it has been proved that in the river there exist silicious alumina clay which would allow cement to be manufactured, we should have had a report through our own responsible officers on the experiments which they have made in this direction. We have officers engaged in our departments who are absolutely competent to express an opinion, and who know the constituents and percentages of lime and clay, and who, from the analyses, are in a position to express a definite opinion whether it is possible to manufacture Portland cement in this State. As a matter of fact, for members' information, I may tell them that it is necessary to have, say, up to 60 or 70 per cent. of calcium carbonate, and the balance is made up of silicious alumina clay. That is fused by the application of heat by

coal, and after it is fused it is ground, and constitutes the Portland cement of to-day. If it has been proved by analysis that there exists in this country a suitable clay to make Portland cement, I think that the Minister who is in charge of this Bill could have used this opportunity to make the information available to the House, because it is very important, considering that practically the whole of the cement coming into this country has originated from German sources in the past—a practice which it is very necessary to stop. Efforts have been made in the Eastern States to establish cement works, but if we have these valuable deposits in this State, the Minister would have been well advised to place a provision in the Bill allowing us to have supplies of Portland cement for the State at reasonable prices. There is no question but that the cement industry is going to play an important part in all spheres of commercial activity for all time in Western Australia. I wish also to draw the attention of the Minister in charge of the Bill to this fact: mention has been made of two rival companies probably operating and competing. We have the specific case of the superphosphate manufacturers in this State, and I have yet to learn that there has been any open competition between the superphosphate manufacturers.

The Minister for Works: I think they are in combination.

Mr. LAMBERT: They have an honourable understanding, and that has, so far, stopped any competition in that very valuable commodity. I would earnestly ask the Minister to consider the point which I have mentioned, and let us see whether we cannot safeguard the important interests of the farmer by having burnt lime supplied to them at a reasonable rate. If it is possible to manufacture cement in this country, it should be, as a *sine qua non*, supplied at a reasonable price.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore—in reply) [5.30]: With regard to the friendly criticism of the member for Fremantle (Mr. Carpenter), I do not think there need be occasion for fear that the promoter will not sign this lease for an indefinite period. If he does not come along and sign the lease within a reasonable period the Government will decline

to proceed further with it. We cannot have any shilly-shallying, but I do not anticipate that there will be anything of the sort. When this measure is passed, I am certain that the gentleman concerned will come along and sign the lease at once. Should he not come along within a reasonable period I certainly would not, in deference to Parliament, think of allowing any extended time to elapse. Having once signed the lease, it is provided that £10,000 shall be spent in the first year and in the next two years another £10,000, and, moreover, the lessee has to put down a deposit of another £1,000. With conditions such as these safeguarding the interests of the State, I do not think there need be any fear that the State will be likely to suffer in the way the member for Fremantle imagines it might do.

Mr. Carpenter: I do not question what might happen after the lease is signed; it is before that time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The promoter will not be able to go on indefinitely. If he does not come forward at once and sign we shall take into consideration the question of cancelling the whole thing.

Mr. Carpenter: So long as you give that assurance I will be satisfied.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will certainly give the hon. member the assurance that I will not allow this matter to be carried on for any undue period. Of course we may allow six weeks or a couple of months to pass, but I believe that the whole matter will be fixed up at once. I shall not countenance any lengthy delay. There are plenty of safeguards against the conditions not being properly carried out. The large amount of money these people are prepared to spend is also a proof of their bona fides. With regard to the question of supplying lime in the burnt state, the experts of the Agricultural Department are quite satisfied with the pulverised lime which it is proposed to supply for agricultural purposes. They think that will be quite sufficient, and Mr. Connor, the Commissioner for the South-West, gives it as his opinion that lime in this form will fulfil all the requirements necessary for agricultural purposes. If, of course, burnt lime is required for domestic or public purposes, I have no doubt that these people will be prepared to meet the demand. Here, how-

ever, they are compelled to provide lime of a certain grade for agricultural purposes, and it is considered by the department that that will be sufficient. Under the circumstances it appears to me that every safeguard has been provided in the Bill. One can always find in an agreement something to which exception may be taken, and one can always discover that if something is likely to happen danger will follow. I am sure, however, that hon. members have no desire to pick holes in this measure. We have introduced it because it is considered that it will be of advantage to the State.

Mr. Angwin: Most of those who wanted to supply the lime at a certain price wanted to have a monopoly for a term of years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The promoter in this instance does not ask for any monopoly. He is prepared to go into the open market. He is satisfied with the experiments he has made, and he is quite prepared to compete against anyone. Under the circumstances we may look forward to being able to see that this cement is supplied at a reasonable price. The industry will be an important one for Western Australia. We must admit that. If cement can be procured at a reasonable price it will be used to a greater extent than is the case at the present time. I hope that before long we shall see this company well established, and that the industry will develop and prove a valuable one for Western Australia.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVES

(No 2).

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [5.41] in moving the second reading said: This measure merely provides for the disposal of a certain area of the caves reserve in the Margaret river district. Hon. members know that, in order to dispose of any area in our class A reserve, it is necessary to pass a measure through Parliament. The litho I have here shows the land in the Margaret river district within the two cave reserves 8694 and 8431. The area is approximately 410 acres, and the area of the

two reserves together is 1,766 acres. It is proposed to excise this portion from the Government reserve, as it is considered that it can be made better use of. The Colonial Secretary, who controls the cave reserve, has no objection to the land being excised from that reserve. He states there are no caves on it, and it is only fit for residential purposes. This area of 410 acres out of the caves reserve is bounded on one side by the Margaret river. The banks of the river are very steep, with rock outcropping in many places, and on the summit is a plateau of good land with jarrah, red gum, and peppermint timber growing on it. It is varying in width from five to twelve chains. On the western portion of the area between there and the coast, there are sand hills covered with scrub, peppermint, and thickets, with limestone outcropping and sandy soil at the back. The land on the eastern portion, that is, the land adjoining the Margaret river, is considered suitable for residential purposes, or perhaps small orchard holdings. This is a highly picturesque part of Australia, I understand, and the coastline is most interesting. We have there a rugged coastline differing from that of other portions of this State. It is thought that many people will be glad to take up blocks of land on this area which it is proposed to excise, for the purpose of building residences in which to spend a month or two during the hot weather. The district itself is interesting. The caves are in the vicinity; the Margaret river is on one side, and the sea coast on the other. Further, I am informed that good fishing is to be obtained. Thus the locality will make an excellent resort for people desirous of securing a rest from the toil of politics and business generally. Again, there is sufficient land on the banks of the river to permit of the establishment of small orchards. Inquiries have already been received by the Lands Department from persons desirous of acquiring land there for that purpose. Indeed, the matter has been under the consideration of the department for some time, and was before the member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson) during his term of office, when, I think, the proposal met with his approval. The whole matter has been thoroughly thrashed out by the department. Under ordinary circumstances,

of course, the land would be disposed of in the ordinary way; but, the land forming part of a class A reserve, the introduction of this Bill is necessary to enable the Minister to deal with the area. The passing of the Bill will tend towards the pleasure and the health of our people, and, at the same time, the sale of the land will result in benefit to the State. Wherever we can get land utilised in Western Australia, there is advantage to Western Australia as a whole. I understand that this area, if surveyed in allotments, will find a ready sale. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Angwin debate adjourned.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read, recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS AND INDUSTRIES (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [5.51] in moving the second reading said: It will be remembered that the season 1914-15 was a particularly favourable one for wheat growing throughout Australia. In fact, that season's harvest constituted an Australian record. Hon. members will recollect that shipping tonnage was remarkably short, especially towards the end of 1915. The shipping trouble became very acute, and it has continued to be acute ever since. Finance, too, became very tight; and it was realised by responsible Ministers that the agents, not being able to ship, would experience considerable difficulty in securing the money necessary to deal with crops of wheat totalling 161 million bushels—24 millions of money. Accordingly, the responsible Ministers and the Commonwealth Government realised that steps must be taken to protect the wheat grower. A conference of State Ministers and representatives of the Commonwealth Government, which sat in Melbourne, recognised that nothing short of handling the total crop would be satisfactory. Therefore, the conference decided to pool the entire Australian wheat crop.

Mr. Angwin: Did not the conference make a mistake in that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have not said so.

The Premier: We do not say so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It was a stupendous task, probably the biggest of its kind ever tackled. We are faced with the necessity of providing 24 millions sterling, and that in despite of the fact that the wheat will not be shifted very speedily, instead of being turned into money, as is usual, in the course of a few months. It must be admitted that, so far, the scheme has been satisfactorily carried out.

Mr. Scaddan: Hear, hear.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The ex-Premier says "Hear, hear." Considering all the circumstances, considering especially the unwillingness of Australians to submit to any form of compulsion, as evidenced during the last few days, I think a wonderful result has been achieved. I think it is marvellous that we have not had more criticism of the scheme, and more objections to it. The member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson) will, I think, agree with me that this scheme was forced on us. Taking all things into consideration, everyone must admit that so far the scheme has proved very successful. Under it the farmer will get more for his wheat than he would have got without the scheme. In the end, I think, the farmer will do fairly well out of the scheme. So far as I know, it represented the only course available. Before concluding I wish to show the present position of the pool, and the result so far. I wish hon. members to realise that on the 16th day of this month there were in Australia 96 million bushels of wheat. Sixty-five million bushels have been shipped or absorbed locally. That quantity realised £16,500,000. Considerably less than half the quantity of wheat received by the pool has been realised, and two-thirds of the amount advanced by the pool, on a basis of 3s. per bushel, has been returned. That fact, at any rate, indicates something as to the price realised by the wheat already sold. The pool is owed 2s. 5½d. per bushel on the quantity remaining to be disposed of; so that the interest of the farmer is the amount which the wheat remaining will realise be-

yond the 2s. 5½d. No doubt, some criticism has been levelled at the Australian Wheat Board in reference to the costs of handling. Naturally, to the farmer receiving 3s. per bushel for his wheat, a charge of 4d. railway freight, and a further charge of 4d. for commission, etc., must seem excessive. The cost of 8d. per bushel from farm to ship seems to him too high. However, I do not wish to be misunderstood. It must be remembered that the railway freight had always to be borne, whether wheat was sent to the pool, or dealt with through the ordinary channels of business. The 3d. commission paid to the agent seems considerably more than ought to be paid at this time; but, now that I am handling the scheme, I find that I shall have considerable difficulty in making, with the agents, such arrangements as will be satisfactory.

Mr. Angwin: You admit that now?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am not admitting anything. I am simply making a statement. As regards the arrangement between the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of the four wheat-exporting States for marketing the Australian wheat crop of 1915-16, the Commonwealth have the necessary power to perform this work under war legislation. Notwithstanding this fact, it was imperative that the individual States should obtain the requisite Parliamentary authority. Such authority has been anticipated in Western Australia. I consider it a pity that this Bill was not introduced last session, because, in my opinion, it is very much better that in dealing with a great question such as the marketing of the State's wheat crop proper authority should be obtained from the Parliament of the country. However, the Bill not having been submitted then, I submit it now; and in doing so I ask for confirmation of all that has been done under the scheme so far as this State is concerned. New South Wales and South Australia had direct authority under their war legislation to operate, in anticipation of fuller powers. Victoria obtained special authority for the purposes of the scheme. The Australian Wheat Board, the central board of control, consider it necessary that the legislation of all other States concerned should be on a uniform basis, so far as local conditions will permit,

with the Victorian Act; and this Bill seeks to attain that end. The member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson), when Minister controlling the scheme, went into the question and had this Bill prepared. The measure is not quite as he left it, but it is practically the Bill which he would introduce were he sitting in my place to-day. The necessity for this national scheme is now well understood, and the scheme itself is very widely approved. I doubt if there is anyone in the State who now questions the wisdom of the scheme.

Mr. Scaddan: Letters recently appeared in the papers objecting to its continuance.

Mr. Willmott: There have been all sorts of letters in the papers. Do you believe them all?

Mr. Scaddan: From your followers, and you are responsible for them, you know.

Mr. Willmott: Someone told me the correspondence came from a Labour man.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is an easy matter for any one who cares to do so to have a letter addressed to a newspaper. It is especially easy to secure insertion of a letter when it is a matter of criticism. When ten persons in a thousand feel they are aggrieved they soon find a way of writing to the newspapers, but the 990 persons who are thoroughly satisfied never say a word. In any case it is no part of Ministerial duty to point out that the scheme has been subject to criticism. I have referred to the fact that the harvest has been a record one and also to the difficulties created by the shortage of shipping. A great many ships have been sunk by the enemy, and a great deal of tonnage lost in other ways. It is true a good many new ships have been built and a good many are in course of construction; but notwithstanding this there is an undoubted shortage of tonnage, and that shortage will continue so long as the war lasts. It is impossible to say whether we shall, owing to this shortage of tonnage, be able to get our wheat away quickly in the future, but it seems likely, seeing that there is less production in some countries. The United States will be some hundred million bushels short this year; so there is a chance that the Home land may need our wheat and that consequently special efforts will be made to ob-

tain tonnage for us. I hope it may be so because it is a matter, not only in the interests of Australia, but also in the interests of the Empire. I would point out that the scheme affords a good opportunity to all producers to market their wheat, and also that whether the wheat be sold here for consumption locally, or exported and realised upon in London, it is still sold on the London parity. The London parity is the basis upon which all wheat in the pool is sold. I think that is a wise provision and one to which no one can take objection.

Mr. Scaddan: It was not done in all cases.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The leader of the Opposition has apparently in mind a difficulty extending over a few weeks, during which it would have been impossible to ship wheat at all at the rate of freight offering. We all know that the wheat market in London has gone up, and that freights have come down; so that on the whole the net return would not have been very much more if the parity had been adhered to.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Large quantities were put in at less than the then rate with the result that friction was created.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Prime Minister naturally put in a price that could be paid at the moment, having regard to freights.

Mr. Scaddan: Would freight be charged on transports?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The amount sent away in transports was not very large. This scheme provides the farmer with some ready money, so much per bushel, less charges. It has provided for the distribution of 24 millions of money. That money has been paid as promptly and with as little delay as possible. The farmer has benefited and so also has every other section of the community. There is not a storekeeper or a wage earner who has not benefited by that money being put into circulation. The scheme came into operation on the 1st November, 1915. The management is vested in an interstate board styled the Australian Wheat Board. There is also a London board acting in an advisory capacity. The Australian Wheat Board consists of the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, the Ministers for Agriculture of Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia; and so long

as the late Minister for Agriculture in this State (Mr. W. D. Johnson) was in office he represented Western Australia on the board. Since the present Government came into office that duty has devolved upon the Minister for Industries. The functions of the Australian Wheat Board include the control of shipping, fixing the price of wheat and maintaining the financial stability of the scheme. All must recognise the splendid help the Prime Minister has been able to render Australia in this matter. I hope that while I continue to represent this State on the board, its position from a financial point of view will be more fixed, that the position will be more hopeful and more stable than in 1915. I would like to assure the House and the country that the best which can be done for the farmer and for the country will be done by every member of the Wheat Board. There is one pleasing feature about this question and that is, it is absolutely non-party. I hope it will never become a party question. The board has had the assistance of an advisory committee comprised of representatives of three of the largest wheat firms in Australia, John Darling & Sons, Bell & Co., and Dalgety & Co. The London advisory committee consists of the High Commissioner for the Commonwealth and the Agents General of the producing States. Their function is to attend to the overseas realisation of wheat exported. This committee is also assisted by representatives of the three firms just mentioned. It will be realised that those controlling this scheme have had to handle a great deal of business. The sending of large parcels of wheat has been undertaken by the Prime Minister himself, and his efforts in that direction have resulted in the saving of a considerable sum to the board. We must all acknowledge the work done by those two boards and by all connected with the scheme, a great number of whom have been connected with the board without fee or reward. We have also a local committee known as the State Wheat Marketing Committee. This committee is quite honorary and acts in an advisory capacity. But it has performed other than advisory duties; in fact this committee has attended to much of the detail work of the scheme. The local committee has done excellent work, its members are

very willing and very hard-working. The committee consists of Mr. Sutton, Wheat Commissioner, Mr. Deane Hammond, of Kellerberrin, who represents the farmer, the local manager of Elder, Shenton & Co., and a representative of Geo. Wills & Co. They are all first class business men, and they have wholeheartedly helped forward the objects of the scheme. They have had also to control the acquisition and shipment of wheat. Good work has also been done by the inquiry agents in the way of making contracts. This work has been done by Ockerby & Co. and the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. In addition the millers also have acted as advisory agents for wheat for milling purposes. These arrangements appear to have given fairly general satisfaction. Of course criticism has been levelled at the scheme and admittedly some mistakes have been made. But it should be borne in mind that in this State the local committee have been dealing in large transactions over a vast area. Along hundreds of miles of railway line there are wheat stacks, and doubtless some damage has been done. The position is a difficult one as compared with Victoria, where the distances are so much shorter. I do not propose to deal in detail with this question of wheat in the stack. I must say I was disappointed at the amount of damage sustained in some of the early ones, due, probably, to the carelessness of some of the persons concerned. The local agents, acting with the firms I have mentioned, have made tentative agreements up to September of the present year, and these have been continued by the Minister until 30th June, 1917. It is hoped by that time the whole of the wheat in the hands of the board will have been shipped. This Bill proposes a continuance of the responsibilities of the wheat board.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Before tea I was endeavouring to explain to the House the question of agency agreements. The acquiring agent is responsible for the out-turn of the wheat at the port of discharge. He is responsible that fair average quality wheat is placed upon the ship for export, and his responsibility does not

cease until the wheat is delivered—fair average quality wheat—at the port of discharge. He must also be responsible that the necessary quantity is placed upon the boat and that it is the quantity received at the other end. Owing to the obligations which the acquiring agent is under to the board, and in order that he may be compelled to carry out his undertakings, as the agreement says he must do, he is under the necessity of putting up a bond of £20,000. That bond is a fairly substantial amount for each of the acquiring firms to place in the hands of the Minister. The payment for this work is as follows:—for acquiring at the sidings and shipping, 3d. a bushel; and for acquiring when consigned direct to the port of shipment 1¼d. per bushel. That means that if a farmer places his wheat upon the trucks and consigns it to the acquiring agent at the port he pays 1¼d. a bushel. There is no means by which the farmer can get the difference, so that he is really very little interested in so dealing with his wheat. The advantage goes to the pool and the farmer's interest in the pool is very small. As most of the farmers sell in small quantities very few of them have taken advantage of the clause. It would be decidedly advantageous to the pool if we could arrange to have a great deal of the wheat consigned to ports or depots in this way. If it could be consigned at this price, the whole question of the handling of wheat would be very much simplified. A great deal of confusion, however, might arise; trucks might go astray, consignment notes might not be regularly made out, and wheat might be lost in transit. All these disadvantages are against the farmer, and this clause so favourable to the pool has not been availed of to any great extent. This Bill intends to affirm all that has happened under the wheat scheme to-day, as well as to provide for the continuation of the scheme in the future. It is a machinery Bill, and the actual control of the wheat is arranged for by agreement with those who had it before the Government. The acquiring charge at the sidings, as I have said, and also for shipping is 3d. a bushel, but where the farmer consigns direct to a port the price paid to the acquiring agent is 1¼d. per bushel. Every hon. member will see how advantageous it would be

if that were the system generally. But it cannot be applied for obvious reasons. There would be some trouble about the trucks at the siding. Again, many of the farmers would not load a full truck in a day. There is, therefore, very little inducement for them to make use of the system.

Mr. Harrison: Who gets the advantage?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The pool. If this system could be applied it would be magnificent but it cannot be applied because the pool gets the advantage, and there is really no inducement to the farmer, who has perhaps a couple of thousand bags, to make any effort to get the wheat down and take the risk involved in its transit merely for the small advantage that would be his portion of what the pool would give him. If he could get the benefit he could afford to take some risk. If the wheat is received at the siding and disposed of locally and sent into the mills, the price paid to the acquiring agent is $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel. The average paid to the agents is about 3d. per bushel. When they issue a certificate to a farmer they get $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel. Hon. members know that when a farmer has placed a quantity of wheat with the pool these agents issue a certificate setting out the quantity that they have received into their stacks. They are responsible for the wheat that goes into the stack, and the stack must out-turn every bushel they put into it, otherwise they are responsible and compelled to pay for the wheat at the standard price. There is a considerable increase in the weight of wheat stacked over the winter months. Under the agreement the wheat, so long as it is not weighed at the increased weight, if subsequently weighing out heavier represents so much of a loss to the farmers. Some of the agents tell me that the difference in weight is very small, but I have reason to believe that it is at least 2 per cent., which is a considerable amount. I do not know that we could get much advantage by reason of the increased weight, because it would be used eventually, as the agents have a right to do, to make good the waste, which is considerable in some of the States. When the wheat is shipped the final payment of $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel is paid to the acquiring agents. The agents are at a considerable loss by reason of the delay in ship-

ping, and I suppose this $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. does not and cannot cover their out of pocket charges. A miller may acquire wheat as an agent for his own purposes. That is to say, at every milling centre a miller's acquiring agent is allowed to take the same risk as the ordinary acquiring agents. Here again the price varies, as well as the bond. The bond in one case is £500 and in another case £1,000, according to the size of the mill. This bond may be increased. The millers may have had the use of the wheat. It is true, they may have gristed to supply orders, but they have the control of it in their mills and their bond should be much more substantial. In acquiring his wheat the miller gets $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. a bushel. If the wheat is obtained direct from the farmer's wagon, the miller pays a premium of a half-penny which reduces the acquiring charge to $1\frac{1}{4}$ d. a bushel, as against $1\frac{3}{4}$ d. if the wheat is raised in trucks. When the pool was started the farmer obtained a certificate for the wheat delivered. That certificate entitled him to an advance of 3s. a bushel free on board less the charges of acquiring, the freight charges and shipping charges. We have been able to pay another 6d. a bushel to the farmers, making the advance 3s. 6d. Hon. members may say that that advance is not all that it should be, and that the remainder of the wheat is good security. I would remind hon. members that, whilst it is good security, it is not so easy to get an advance with which to make a further payment. I think it would be a good thing to keep the advance against wheat up to a 3s. average. I want farmers to realise that the best that can be done for them has, in my opinion, been done under this scheme. The condition of the finances of this State is such that it will be very difficult to do as well during the next year as has been done in the past. Everyone knows that the war has cost an enormous sum of money, and it is quite right too that the war expenditure should be the first expenditure met. However, hon. members may rest assured that I will get all I can, because I know that the farmer needs at least 3s. a bushel, if he is to carry on. Quite apart from that I realise that the advance to the farmer is an advance to all the people. No money circulates so rapidly as the farmer's money, and there is no sovereign quite as big as the sovereign which the

farmer gets for the cultivation of the soil. In the early stages of the advances 4d. a bushel was paid in excess of the amount paid to the farmers in the Eastern States. When it came to the payment of the second dividend at 6d. we found that we would only be able to pay 2d. to the farmers. I realised that to pay farmers 2d. would be altogether too little, and that it would mean £125,000 instead of £385,000. We of course could not expect the pool to do more for us than had been done for others, but the Premier entered into negotiations with the Australian wheat board and the Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes, with the result that permission was obtained for the State Government to make itself responsible for the additional 4d. After an unavoidable delay—it is not an easy matter to raise £250,000—the Treasurer successfully negotiated this matter and he told me I could arrange for the payment of the full 6d. to the farmers. I hope it will be realised that it was not an easy matter to arrange for the payment of this 6d., and the matter was made more difficult because of the fact that it is almost impossible at the present time to raise money.

Mr. Angwin: Do not labour the matter too much.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think it is worth labouring; it was a magnificent achievement on the part of the Treasury.

Mr. Angwin: It was much easier than you are trying to make out.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have no desire to infer that the hon. member and his colleagues, if they had been in power, would not have attempted to do the same thing. If they had succeeded I should have been among the first to applaud their efforts. Notwithstanding the interjection, we are entitled to take some credit for the transaction. It should be remembered that the total advance to farmers in Western Australia amounts to-day to 3s. 10d. per bushel free on board. That includes freight to Fremantle and all charges. The farmers in the Eastern States have had an advance of only 3s. 6d. This seems to me to be a perfectly safe position to have reached and one that will, no doubt, prove to be sound, because I think the farmers will get a fairly substantial dividend from the pool. This

makes the value of the wheat equal to 3s. 2d., that is allowing 8d. for charges. The quality of the wheat last year was affected by rust and that made the position difficult. This year, fortunately, it promises to be of much better quality. I desire to refer to the condition of the stacks. There is a little weevil at Fremantle, there is no use trying to disguise the fact, and the sooner we get the wheat away the better. If weevil is to be regarded as a serious menace, it will make the question of stacking at Fremantle next year a difficult one. The stacking at Fremantle has been economically done because of the up to date appliances. Inexperience on the part of sub-agents in the country in effective stacking discloses room for improvement, but this should be remedied next year. I think hon. members might show some interest in these stacks and on noticing defects when travelling about the country, they might, without delay, advise the Government. Farmers themselves might also show some interest in them by taking the proper steps which will prevent waste. We have to remember that all these stacks belong to the farmers, so that they really can afford to interest themselves in what are their own affairs. While some of the stacks are well roofed, and otherwise well protected, there are some to which better attention might have been devoted. The stack at Dowerin, and those further along the line, are well protected, but others, while roofed, have no side sheeling, and the wheat has been spilled and consequently lost. There has also been carelessness in effecting repairs. Everyone knows that if the slightest hole is made in a bag on the outside of a stack that bag will soon empty itself and the result will be that the stack will be likely to fall down. At Albany the wheat is safely housed in well appointed stores—there are about 50,000 bags there. At Bunbury the stacks are particularly well built and are opening up well; there are about 190,000 bags. At Geraldton all the shipable wheat has been cleared. The late Minister managed to induce the shipping companies to carry that wheat away, which was a very satisfactory arrangement. At Fremantle, in spite of the few traces of weevil, the stacks are opening up well. There are about 1,257,000 bags. That total represents more wheat than the

whole State produced eight years ago, a wonderful result when we remember the prediction that the State would never be a wheat producer. I remember the time when it was said that we would not produce sufficient oranges to feed Western Australia. Now we find oranges growing everywhere, and that the State can grow enough fruit to feed the population ten times over. The general damage to the wheat as a whole, considering the magnitude of the harvest, is not relatively great. There has, of course, been some loss, but on the whole I do not think we have much to complain about.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Inferior jutes contributed to the loss.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: And lack of care on the part of some of the agents. If we could have the wheat where it could be cared for, that arrangement would be better than having it stacked all over this great State, but we cannot go to the expense of introducing the elevator system throughout the country. We took into our pool 15,000,000 bushels of wheat. The total crop last year was something over 18,000,000 bushels—a magnificent result. Of the total of 15,000,000 we have shipped and sold locally a little over 7,000,000, and we have in our stacks to-day 7,800,000 bushels. We have advanced altogether 3s. 10d. a bushel, and the amount actually paid out, viz., 3s. 6d., represents £2,621,000 distributed amongst the wheat growers of the State. If they get another dividend of 6d., and I think they will, then the amount distributed for wheat dealt with through the pool will be over £3,000,000, a very fine sum indeed. For the quantity sold we have received £1,700,000 cash. Thus it will be seen that for considerably less than half the wheat we have already received nearly two-thirds of the total amount advanced. I do not know that I need deal at much greater length with this matter. Twenty-five millions represents the first advance of 3s. per bushel, and it must be kept in mind that whatever is done for the farmer in Western Australia must be done for the farmer all over Australia, as the wheat board represents all the States. When I leave for the East, as I hope to do on Saturday, in connection with this matter, I shall be faced with the question of arranging advances for all the farmers of this con-

tinent. It will not be a question of 2½ millions for the farmers here, but a question of 25 millions for the farmers throughout Australia. While the wheat board will do their best, that best may not be equal to an advance of 3s. per bushel. In addition to the handling of the new season's crop, there is a balance of last season's crop to be dealt with. Of that crop, two million tons remain to be shipped. There are one or two other points I desire to touch on briefly. There is the question of the agreement as it affects the millers. This is a machinery Bill, and machinery Bills are best dealt with in Committee; but I think it necessary to mention now that there is in this measure a clause which really interprets the agreement. At any rate, it sets out certain matters relative to the miller who bought wheat before the pool originated. It provides that he shall be protected to the extent the agreement was intended to protect him. Of that, I think, there is ample evidence. One does not like introducing legislation which is retrospective in its operation, but this, in my opinion, is a case where retrospective legislation does only what is right. Certain millers, before the wheat pool came into existence, bought wheat from the farmer, and probably paid him about 4s.

Mr. Hickmott: They gave as much as 6s. for forward delivery.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That may be for early delivery. The millers probably gristed that wheat early. The farmer who got 6s. from the miller was very fortunate, and the miller was not so fortunate.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: It was purely for early wheat.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. I am dealing with the wheat acquired by the miller to be exported, to cover sales abroad. When the pool came into operation, the millers placed their wheat with the pool. Naturally, they got the ordinary advance which the farmer gets. Up to date the millers have received an advance of 3s. 6d. The miller who needs wheat for gristing for export draws that wheat from the pool at the price of 5s. 1½d. per bushel. The agreement, of course, guarantees that wheat so taken from the pool shall return the miller

at least 5s. 1½d. per bushel, no matter what the pool may eventually realise. If the pool realises more, the miller will get more; if the pool realises less, the miller is guaranteed to the extent of 5s. 1½d. per bushel. So far as the miller had contracted, before the pool came into operation, to export wheat, that is a fair arrangement. The miller puts his wheat into the pool, and he gets his advance, and the wheat is dealt with in the same way as ordinary farmers' wheat. But, obviously, if the miller had made his contract for sale abroad, we should be doing him an injustice if we charged him more than he was receiving. In addition, the miller gets a profit on his gristing. In this connection I am sorry to say that the millers did not quite observe the understanding they made with the late Minister for Lands. They were supposed to have sold something like 150,000 bags. But, as a matter of fact, after much inquiry and searching and trouble, we found the quantity sold to be 324,000 bags. By Clause 11 of the Bill I ask the House to recognise the responsibility which it was agreed the Government should undertake as regards the 150,000 odd bags sold for export under contracts made by the millers prior to the establishment of the pool. We say that we will not interfere with that arrangement notwithstanding the fact that the wheat is in the pool. But it seems to me that that is all that can be expected. It was all that was intended when the agreement was prepared. In my opinion, the House should realise that there are, beyond the 150,000 odd bags, 174,000 bags which have to be covered by the pool in the ordinary way. I do not know what difference it will make to the millers, but that is all we are asking by Clause 11. I do know that the miller was not entitled to any more consideration under the agreement. He is entitled to consideration only in respect of contracts made prior to the date of the arrangement under which the Government would export flour. I repeat, I am sorry to have to introduce retrospective legislation, and legislation interfering with agreements, but I see no other means of avoiding expensive legislation.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: You ought to do justice to those who have honourably carried out the agreement which was entered into.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We do so.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: We must not do them any injustice.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I agree with that. I hope hon. members will look carefully into this Bill and make it a Committee measure in the best possible sense. Certainly, every farmer's representative should know exactly what the machinery proposed by this Bill is. Careful consideration of the measure in Committee is far more important than discussion on the second reading. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford, [8.25]: As I understand the Minister desires to get the second reading through to-night, I shall support the second reading. However, I should have liked more time to prepare what I have to say, so as to be able to do something like justice to this important question. As one who played a part, though perhaps a small one, in the initiation of the wheat scheme, I was pleased to hear the Minister's tribute to the success of the scheme and his general endorsement of what has been done under it. Rightly and justly, the Minister paid a special tribute to the Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes, for the important part that gentleman took, as we all know, in ensuring that the producers of Western Australia and of Australia generally should obtain for their wheat the very best price possible under the conditions prevailing. There is no question that Mr. Hughes initiated the idea of marketing the wheat although he was not responsible for the general pooling scheme decided upon ultimately. Even as regards that scheme, he played no small part. His enthusiasm and energy and ability undoubtedly enabled those good things to be accomplished which have been enumerated this evening by the hon. gentleman opposite. During the Minister's speech the leader of the Opposition pointed out, by interjection, that at the outset a misunderstanding arose in the minds of quite a number of producers as regards what is really London parity. It is true that we could not create what is commonly termed a London parity in connection with the sale of wheat under this scheme, for the reason that the

Commonwealth Government placed at the disposal of the board controlling the wheat scheme a number of transports which had been commissioned or commandeered, and made those transports available at comparatively low rates of freight, rates of freight below the ruling rates. It is not correct, as the Minister inadvertently stated, that these transports were confined to the carriage of parcels. They were generally used for full cargoes. The result of the Commonwealth Government's action in making the transports available for the carriage of wheat at rates considerably below ruling rates was that the first rate of freight declared by the wheat board was considerably below the market rate. The board were enabled to announce that low rate owing to the cheapness of the transport freights. Thus, had the London parity been declared at that time, it must have been declared with due regard to the rates of freight generally prevailing. Thus any argument in regard to London parity was at that time very much discounted. In addition to acting so generously—as one can advisedly say—to the producers of Australia in regard to transport freights, Mr. Hughes also did a considerable amount of work in inducing the Imperial Government to assist in the securing of freight. To a large extent the Imperial Government commandeered freight and made it available to Australia. Further, Mr. Hughes arranged large sales of wheat to the British and Allied Governments at very satisfactory rates. Generally speaking, his interest in this scheme has been so great, and his influence with the Imperial Government has been used so effectively to further the scheme, that I am satisfied the producers are grateful to him for the important assistance he has rendered towards securing for them the price realised up to date and the price which it is hoped will be realised for the last harvest. It may be as well to place on record the fact that while I personally was from the very inception favourable to the pooling of the entire Australian harvest—in point of fact, I raised that question at the very first conference, before ever Australia had agreed to pool shipping—that idea had not yet been endorsed by the conference. And Mr. Hughes was not favourably disposed to go into the undertaking

which he has since gone into with regard to the pool. I want it placed on record because it will demonstrate that the pooling of the harvest was forced on the conference. Otherwise it would hardly have been satisfactory. The charterer appointed by the Commonwealth Government had obtained a certain amount of freight, but nothing like what would be required, and we, as a conference, invited the wheat shippers to discuss the question with us. So far as my memory serves me, I put this position to them, "we can definitely state that up to, say, the beginning of February"—I am speaking from memory—"so much freight can be offered to you, and then after that we may be able to announce some more freight."

Mr. Harrison: From your experience, do you not think that more freight could have been secured through the ordinary channels?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No. I said we would have a certain amount of freight, then there would be a break, and later on we would probably be in a position to make another announcement regarding additional freight. I asked these wheat buyers what attitude they would adopt, whether they would start right away to buy up and keep on buying in anticipation of getting more freight later on, or would limit their buying to the amount of freight available and then stop. They said definitely and distinctly that they would buy up to the limit of freight available and would then stop buying. That made it perfectly clear to me that the wheat shipper in Western Australia—and I was on the conference to represent Western Australia—would be considered only under the most favourable conditions in the matter of shipment, leaving the farmer outback and in the remote parts until the final shipping, and possibly leave him out altogether. Therefore, I realised and the conference realised, that it was absolutely essential we should pool the whole harvest in order to get a guarantee that the remotely situated farmer would have an equal opportunity of marketing his wheat with the man situated close to a port under more favourable conditions. That was the real reason which influenced the conference in dealing with the whole of the Australian harvest; and I think it has proved a wise course. There is just one little growl I have to make.

It is in regard to the attitude of the Farmers and Settlers' Association. It will be remembered that at the outset of this scheme I made a special appeal through the Press to farmers to bring in their wheat as early as possible, pointing out that we have an earlier harvest here, and that if we utilised our advantages in that direction we could command the freight which would become available in December, thus getting what I call a flying start in regard to the marketing of our wheat. Some farmers did respond to that call; but the Farmers' and Settlers' executive—or at least their secretary—instructed their members generally not to respond to that invitation. The result was that we did not get in anything like the wheat we should have done by December. That cost the farmers of this State a considerable sum of money. I am rather proud of the fact that Western Australia is in the happy position that, while we have advanced more money to our farmers here than in any other part of Australia, we at the same time have paid less interest. For a long time this was a conundrum to the people of the East. They wondered how we managed it. They pointed out that we paid our farmers more money, and that still the interest was less in Western Australia than in Eastern Australia. That was due to the fact that we got away a lot of wheat in December and had not to pay out on the certificates till later on. In other words we started with a credit balance instead of, as in some of the Eastern States, with a deficit; and if Stanistreet had kept off the grass and not interfered by advising the farmers not to respond to the Government's invitation, the position would have been better still. That action meant a very considerable loss to the farmers and caused a grave injustice.

Mr. Wansbrough: On the other hand, is it not a fact that you saved that interest at the expense of the farmers?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No; the member is quite wrong. We could not have done otherwise because at that time the financial arrangements with the banks had not been completed. It will be remembered that time after time I made statements through the Press, pointing out that I was negotiating with the banks while I was in the Eastern States, urging them to push on with the

arrangements. Owing to certain complications with regard to making the money available payment for certificates was delayed but as soon as the money became available it was paid over. In addition to paying tribute to Mr. Hughes I also desire to express my gratitude to the other members of the conference who gave favourable consideration to the State of Western Australia. Applications were made for shipping at each of the ports, and this year we were able to include Bunbury, which had never been done before. Special consideration was also given to the port of Geraldton, which, as the Minister has pointed out, is one of the most difficult shipping ports in Australia. All this consideration tended to make the work of handling the harvest a great deal easier in Western Australia. Owing to the consideration extended by the Commonwealth and the officers running the concern in Melbourne, Western Australia got on remarkably well. I want also to pay a tribute of praise as the Minister has done, to the board appointed to advise with regard to the general working of the scheme in Western Australia. Comment has been made on the fact that certain firms were singled out for representation on that board. That can be easily explained. It was necessary we should endeavour to secure a class of advisers conversant with matters connected with the fixing of price, but not directly connected with the buying or marketing of wheat. We found it necessary also to obtain advisers who had experience in shipping so that we might have advice also in that connection. We determined, if possible, to secure the services of the manager of Elder, Shenton & Co., who is not a buyer but who is well versed in shipping, and of Mr. Goss, of Geo. Wills & Co., who is also outside the wheat market, but is well versed in commercial matters and shipping. We thought if we could secure these we would have gentlemen in a position to give us sound advice without being interested parties, and I am pleased to say that when representations were made to those firms they were agreeable to their managers acting. The assistance rendered by those two gentlemen may be admitted, but I think I am justified in according special praise to Mr. Sutton for his portion of the work. Mr. Deane Ham-

mond looked after the farmers' interest in a manner creditable to himself and advantageous to the farmers he represented. The whole board worked well together, with the result that the farmers of Western Australia comparatively are better off than the Eastern farmers, due largely to the ability of those handling the scheme. I have pointed out that Mr. Hughes was able to arrange for large sales to the British and allied Governments. That matter was raised at one conference after we had agreed to pay, I think it was 1 per cent., speaking from memory, to the board appointed to conduct the sales in Melbourne. As the Minister has pointed out, that proposal embraced Darling & Sons, James Bell & Co., and Dalgety & Co. That board dealt with the sales and the general handling business in Melbourne. We found that so many sales were affected direct through the energy of Mr. Hughes that we thought it unfair the agents should get full commission on those sales. We were able to make a reduction as a result of representations, and instead of one per cent., I think $\frac{3}{8}$ per cent. was agreed to, or something like that. I raise these points to show that even after we had started the scheme we were able, through the consideration shown by these firms, to alter the arrangement as the scheme went on, with the result that we saved a fair amount of money to the farmers. I think it is only fair that that should be put on record, as it is evidence that those connected with the business were not anxious to make undue profits, and that they realised that all should make some little sacrifice in order to see that Australia's produce was marketed in the interests of those who had handled it under difficult conditions. Regarding the payment of the extra 4d. in Western Australia, which raised some adverse comment in the Eastern States, it will be remembered that at the very outset of the scheme I called a meeting of members of Parliament in this Chamber to discuss the scheme in an informal way. I stated then I was of the opinion that acquirement charges would not be deducted from the first 3s., and after consulting with the Premier of that time the Government agreed that in Western Australia this deduction would not be made, and that, if necessary, the Government would make it up. Owing to the fact

of our early shipment and that we were working with the assistance of the Industries Assistance Board which controlled so much of the wheat, I am glad that we were able to make that extra payment of 4d. without calling on the Government to put any money into this scheme. It was explained to the conference this arrangement was not made with any view to undermining or in any way running counter to the understanding arrived at, that if we had done wrong it was owing to misunderstanding. They accepted the explanation and there was no further comment. Evidently every one was well satisfied that Western Australia should be made a special case. It is to be borne in mind that in Western Australia we are not developed to the same extent as the farming districts in the other States. South Australia comes nearer than any of the others to our conditions, but even their farmers are better off because they have reached a stage of development which we have not. We have a considerable number of farmers absolutely dependent on wheat growing for a living; consequently when we are limited to wheat growing it becomes essential that we should make advances in order to pay for the growing of the wheat. By advancing only 2s. 4d. per bushel in Western Australia it would not have met the cost of producing the wheat by a good way, with the result that our farmers would have been either forced on to the Industries Assistance Board, or been obliged to get financial assistance from some other source, or leave their farms. Where we are in a special position such as that, we are justified in asking for that special condition to be taken into account, and to be permitted to give special consideration to our farmers. I am prepared to admit that there would be some little argument in regard to the special clause to which the Minister has already made reference. It is a clause which will be discussed when we reach the Committee stage, and I will therefore say little about it at the moment. As far as my judgment goes, and the matter has been investigated closely, we would be doing an absolute injustice to a number of our millers unless we pass that clause. The position is this: when it was first decided to start what is known as the wheat marketing scheme, on my first return

from Melbourne after interviewing the Prime Minister I convened a meeting of millers for the purpose of discussing the situation. I pointed out that it was proposed that the whole of the marketing of the wheat should be done by a central board composed of Ministers and the Prime Minister. I asked them whether they would be agreeable without any compulsion to work in with this scheme, namely, that they would buy from the scheme and not attempt to purchase wheat, if they required it, direct from the farmers. There is no doubt that this undertaking was given to me. It is true, it was given verbally, but the millers agreed that they would work in with the scheme and would not buy direct from the farmers. There was some little delay between that meeting and the subsequent conference in Melbourne, with the result that a number of the millers finding that they had to maintain their connection with the outside world so far as the export of flour was concerned, discovered that it was absolutely essential owing to representations being made to them to quote for the supply of flour, and having secured contracts for the supply of that commodity, that they should buy wheat to fulfil those contracts, because they were unable to judge what the wheat would cost if it was bought through the pool when that ultimately came about. To be safe, and as business men, they decided to buy wheat in order to fulfil the contracts which they had made. When the matter was discussed the second time it was pointed out that a number of the millers had not abided by the understanding arrived at, and that some of them had bought wheat contrary to the undertaking given. In discussing the matter I found that they had bought for the purpose of fulfilling commitments for flour contracts, and it seemed, owing to this, that we were going to be at a dead lock and that there was a possibility of the flour millers not working in with the agreement. After some discussion, during which it was pointed out that they had purchased up to 150,000 bags, it was ultimately agreed that we should recognise this 150,000 bags as a legitimate purchase, and that we should make a special arrangement for the 150,000 bags, and then work out under the general arrangements of

the pool. That is the 150,000 bags which are referred to in the special clause which the Minister has spoken of to-night. After we had gone on with the pool for some considerable time, we discovered that the 150,000 bags had increased to 400,000 bags. Consequently, we found that a certain number of the millers had gone on buying wheat whilst others had loyally abided by the undertaking given and only purchased wheat from the pool. We, therefore, found that we had a lot of millers who had purchased a considerable quantity of wheat at 3s. 8d. or 3s. 9d. and possibly 4s. a bushel, whereas there were other millers who had abided by their word and the compact entered into had been buying from the pool at 5s. a bushel, and yet they had to compete with the millers who had broken away from their compact and had bought at the lower rate. I had the millers before me on several occasions, in order to point out the unfairness of this, and endeavoured by various means to bring about an understanding in regard to it. Although we met on several occasions we had no success, and it was ultimately decided that we should bring a more satisfactory position about by legislation. I am glad, therefore, to see that the Minister has endorsed the arrangement which I arrived at, that of asking the House to pass a clause of this description interpreting the agreement to mean what it undoubtedly did mean, that we would allow them to purchase up to 150,000 bags, and that this should be specially dealt with, but anything over that should go to the pool. Now they want to put the 400,000 bags through a special agreement, instead of the 150,000 bags. The dispute that this clause proposes to put right is the question as to whether we will recognise that which we did at the outset, 150,000 bags or, roughly speaking, 400,000 bags. I am only speaking in round numbers. If we recognise the 400,000 bags, we will be doing a grave injustice to the other millers who loyally abided by their undertaking given at the outset of the scheme. The Minister laid special stress on the condition of the stacks. I am prepared to admit that the stacking is not all that one would desire, and I think that we were a little parsimonious in regard to the appointment of inspectors to see that the stacks were properly arranged

and cared for. It would have been better if we had spent a little more money and put on one or two inspectors to look after the stacking. We were under the impression, seeing that the agents were responsible for the marketing of the wheat, that they had to guarantee to put into the boats the wheat that they purchased, and that therefore any loss which occurred would have to be made good out of their pockets, that there was no need to take any such precautions. It would have been better for all concerned if we had had the stacks inspected, seen that they were properly constructed and erected, and properly covered. A great deal of the trouble which has arisen is, I think, due to the bad bags that we got last year. As farmers, we know that there was a very poor sample of bags sent to us, and that very often when a bag was filled in the field it burst as soon as it was lifted and was absolutely useless.

Mr. Wansbrough: They would not stand the wear.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: That is so. A considerable quantity of the stacks fell down, not through any fault in stacking or covering, but because the bags that the wheat was put into were so inferior in quality that they would not hold the wheat.

Mr. Harrison: Is the quality of the jute for this year guaranteed?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No. I recognise with the Minister that the position for the future is none too bright. The finances are tighter now than when we first started the scheme. At that time we had no wheat in hand, whereas this year we are starting with a considerable amount of last year's wheat on hand. The position is anything but cheering, and I desire to extend to the Minister all the consideration I can in the task he has before him when he goes to Melbourne. He will be ably supported by the other Ministers, and it is a good thing that there is a number of the Ministers who had experience last year. He will meet experienced men there, and judging by the consideration which was extended to Western Australia on the previous occasion I feel confident that it will be extended again to the Minister when he goes this time. I want to appeal to the farmers' representatives to take into consideration the fact

that this is a huge co-operative effort. I think it is one of the finest things ever done for the producers in any country. It would be a grave mistake for our farmers to let it go out of existence. We should endeavour to bring into existence some permanent organisation that might continue to look after the marketing of our wheat and possibly go further and generally look after the marketing of the whole of the produce of Australia. It seems to me to be totally unnecessary that we should go to the middleman—I say this with the utmost respect—and pay him high rates when it is possible for us to pay officers to do the work on our behalf. So far as Western Australia is concerned, we can handle the whole of the next harvest without any agents. We can get an organisation going in the country just as they have. We have the railways as they have. We have the organisation at the ports as they have. It is the easiest thing in the world with the educated staff that we have to-day for us to do the whole of the work without paying any of the fees that we are paying now. Of course it is a difficult thing for the Government to take up. There are party differences to be taken into consideration, and the Government are always open to criticism which is unfair. I think it would be possible, if wise counsel was to prevail, for some organisation created on a truly co-operative basis, not under Government control, but with Government backing, to be brought into existence, and that by this means we could take advantage of the education we have for the marketing of the wheat and make it a permanent concern, not limiting it to wheat, however, but extending it to the produce of Australia generally. I think it is possible that a great mistake will be made if we miss this opportunity of establishing a huge co-operative effort for the purpose of marketing the produce of Australia. I recognise that there will be some discussion in Committee, but so far as my ability allows I will assist the Minister to get a good workable measure through, because I recognise the difficulty of trying to work a scheme of this description without legislative enactment. It was difficult last year because we had no power, but this year we have the power, and having that power it should be possible to make better terms than were pos-

sible under the difficult conditions of last season. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of this Bill.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [8.43]: The Minister has told us about the provisions of the Bill and the member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson) has told us about agents, wheat-growers, bankers, and millers. I want to say something about consumers. Everyone forgets that we have consumers in Western Australia.

Mr. Wansbrough: We did not forget them last year.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The consumers are paying 1s. 6d. a bushel more than the farmers are getting out of the pool. I do not want to go into what has been done in the past, but to deal with the fact that this Bill provides for the continuation of the pool for next year's crop. I contend that before it is applied to next year's crop, the Western Australian consumer should have a fair deal. It is absolutely unfair to ask the consumers of Western Australia to pay abnormally high prices for wheat when we have wheat to burn. We have millions of bags down at Fremantle which will eventually have to be shifted and dumped into the sea. Let hon. members make no mistake about that. At the present time we have not half our crop away and three parts of the year have gone. It is obvious to anyone who considers the question that that wheat cannot all be shipped. It is a most serious question for the Minister's consideration. There is a proposition in my mind that should have received consideration, and it is the materially reducing of the price to the millers, so that the growers of stock may be able to use more offal.

Mr. Scaddan: The Attorney General is going to help to reduce the price of bran and pollard.

The Attorney General: We shall get cheaper bran and pollard if we follow business methods.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Before we deal with next year's crop it is due to the Attorney General's constituents that the consumers should get some consideration. There is no possible chance of getting wheat away; there are other considerations. For instance,

as pointed out by G. P. Russell, in a speech at Geraldton, it was stated—

Another price of victory would be paid by the opening of the Dardanelles. There were twelve million tons of Russian wheat stored up and when this was released, not one ton of wheat would leave Australia. From the above figures it would be seen that even with a victory it meant disaster to the Commonwealth from a financial point of view.

Mr. Russell was speaking with a view of preventing Australia sending more soldiers to win the war, but it is quite possible that the Allies will win the war without Australia's help, and then the Dardanelles will be opened.

The Minister for Railways: I hope they will be open to-morrow.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do, too. But at the same time the wheat grower should not get the whole of the bonus; the consumer should be considered as well. We should have wheat at something like 3s. 6d. a bushel.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Oh, no!

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That is all they are getting in the pool now. By the time we get next year's crop on top of this, and attempt to get it away, we shall get 2s. 6d.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Oh, get out!

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is easy enough to say "get out." Wheat is on the Fremantle wharves and it is on every railway siding in Western Australia, and the new crop is coming on.

Mr. Smith: The Argentine crop is a failure.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Ours is not. The only people who think it is a failure in Western Australia are the consumers, who are paying an exorbitant price in times of plenty. We are entitled to consider this question from the consumer's point of view.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: But they are paying market rates now.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The millers are paying 4s. 9d. and all the pool has paid to date is 3s. 6d. Therefore, we are paying 1s. 3d. a bushel more than the market price of wheat. If it were not for the home consumption, you would not pay 2s. 6d. on what you have shipped. It is the Western Australian consumers who are paying this

extra 6d. and 1s. or so besides to the wheat growers. We should have some guarantee in regard to this measure, that before the proclamation is issued Parliament will be consulted, and that the House will, at least, have some guarantee that the consumers' interest is being considered. It is easy for a party supported by representatives of the wheat growers keeping the Government in office to get all they can out of the consumers. The whole of the consumers in Western Australia are concerned in this and I am surprised at the opposition on the part of the late Minister for Lands.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: I am only putting you right.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Before the proclamation is issued Parliament should be consulted and we should have a definite statement as to what price the consumer is going to pay. That is a point worthy of consideration by every hon. member in this House.

Mr. WANSBROUGH (Beverley) [8.52]: In supporting the second reading I desire to express regret that sufficient time has not been given for the consideration of this measure. I understand, however, that it is simply a ratification of the arrangement made last session. I agree with the previous speakers that the value of the scheme has been appreciated by the farming community of this State, and, so far as possible, the consumers have been considered under it to the tune of a shilling and something to the bushel.

Mr. Scaddan: No, 6d.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: Take the average advance, it runs out at 3s. 6d., less handling charges. The consumers, therefore, have had a fair deal out of the scheme, and so far as the measure goes they will get a fair deal out of it this time. I would like to impress upon the Minister, that while he is in the Eastern States he should see that at least we get in the vicinity of 2s. 6d. clear at the siding. The members of this House, who have visited farming areas recently, will agree that the harvest of this year will not be as big as that of last year. In some localities there are good crops, but in others we see inferior ones, and possibly the average will not be much over eight bushels. Therefore, if the advance is based on 2s. 6d., which we saw in the Press, I do not know how the

farmers will carry on on this year's average. I impress upon the Minister the desirability of bringing about the 2s. 6d. advance at the siding. If that can be done, much good will result and the Minister will earn the thanks of the farming community generally. There is a vast difference in the conditions of farming in different districts of Western Australia. A lot of people moving about the country view farming from the standpoint of the railways they are travelling on. The position of the man in a dry area is different from that of the man in the Avon Valley. The man in the Avon Valley does not rely upon his wheat; he goes in for stock and has side-lines, whereas the man in the dry area confines his attention solely to wheat. Therefore, in making the advance, everything should be considered, and nothing less than 2s. 6d. will be of any use. Reference has been made to the condition of the stacks in the country districts. I agree with the member for Guildford who said that much damage has been caused by the use of inferior bags. The board this year are insisting upon the use of new bags in the stacks. That will be a hardship because many farmers to-day are carrying last year's bags, which were new then, but which perhaps through exposure look like second hand. These bags have not had a grain of wheat in them. There are hundreds of thousands of bags carried over from last year, bags which had to be stacked, and in many cases the bales were broken, and when thus exposed to the weather were reduced in appearance to bags which had been used. Many stacks are in a bad state, and I agree with the Minister that travelling inspectors will be of considerable benefit and will effect a saving to the pool eventually, though, at the same time, I fail to see that one or two inspectors only will be sufficient. I am satisfied that stacks have fallen down because of inexperience in their erection. On the other hand, there are stacks in the far Eastern districts—I am referring to the South Kumminin areas—which have no equal in Western Australia. They were built by the farmers themselves and reflect the greatest credit on the farmers responsible for them. Not a bag of wheat has been wasted in those stacks and not a grain has been spilt from top to bottom. That shows what can be done by care-

ful stacking. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Mr. SCADDAN (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [8.57]: I am afraid that too many hon. members, and the public as well, imagine that the question of handling the harvest has been disposed of since the Government made arrangements with the banks to make the advance. They imagine that the problem has been solved. The problem has not been anything like solved, although one must admit from the remarks of the Minister that, so far as last season's crop is concerned, we are safe in saying that the pool will be able just about to adjust the differences with the advance agreed to recently. We can say, in the event of peace being declared, even next week, if that were possible, that the amount received by the pool against wheat shipped, together with the amount received by the pool against wheat used for gristing purposes in Australia, and the possibility of being able to quickly transport a portion of it, would enable the pool to at least clear itself. The other difficulty is that pointed out by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood). We have a new season, and while our harvest may not be as great as that of last year, there is a possibility of the harvest being just as good in the other States, and we have to view the pool from the standpoint of all Australia. Over and above that, to my mind, the consumer of this State is being penalised. As a community they have taken action to help the farmer, and they have not been considered in the slightest degree. The pool is really a corporate action on the part of the people of the Commonwealth; therefore the community, as well as the producer, has arranged the pool. When it was first arranged there was no intention to bring the local miller into it. In fact, it was contended that millers had already commenced to purchase their wheat largely, and also to grind the flour required for local consumption and for export. Before long, Parliament decided that in the interests of the farmer the local miller should be compelled to purchase wheat out of the local pool. Even as regards the wheat previously purchased by the local miller, we made him pay to the pool the difference between London parity and the amount which he had paid to the farmer.

Thus the community brought about a fictitious London parity, and the community have suffered from that ever since. As the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) rightly asserts, the consumer is entitled to some consideration. It is somewhat remarkable that good gristing wheat can today be purchased for fowl feed at 4s. per bushel in the metropolitan area; while, for the purpose of the manufacture of bread, wheat is based on a price of 4s. 9d. per bushel. The merchants are allowed to obtain wheat at from 3s. 6d. to 3s. 11d. per bushel in the markets from farmers who desire to sell direct and so obtain ready cash rather than put their wheat into the pool. One can to-day purchase wheat delivered in one's back yard at 4s. per bushel; and that is good gristing wheat. Next I wish to draw the attention of the Attorney General, and also that of the Colonial Secretary, to the conundrum they are putting to the Minister controlling the wheat scheme. On the one hand, the Attorney General says that what is needed for his electors is to bring about the gristing of a greater quantity of wheat in Western Australia in order to encourage the export of flour, thus providing a greater quantity of bran and pollard for the poultry farmer. About three months previously the Attorney General's present colleague, the Colonial Secretary, had accused the then Government of attempting to bribe the metropolitan electors by providing cheap bread at the farmers' expense. Apparently, the reason for that charge was that at that time it was decided, not by the State Government at all, but by the board controlling the wheat pool, that wheat to the local miller should not at that particular juncture be sold to the local miller on the London parity. As the board rightly pointed out, the London parity at that date might not be the London parity when taken over the whole period during which the pool would operate, and thus the local miller at that stage might be paying for the wheat which he would require for the purposes of the season a higher rate than would eventually work out as being the London parity. For that reason the board decided that the price to be paid by the local millers should be 4s. 9d. per bushel. On those facts was based the Colonial Sec-

retary's charge against the late Government of having attempted to bribe the metropolitan electorates. Assuming that the Colonial Secretary was sincere in making that charge, and assuming that the Attorney General was sincere when addressing his electors, we have this position: one Minister asserted that the London parity, whatever it turned out to be, should have been paid by local miller to the local pool; while the other Minister said, "We want to encourage the export of flour to the world's markets, and the London parity of 4s. 9d. makes that difficult." The two Ministers, therefore, standing side by side, could not possibly both obtain what they desired. The board could not charge 5s. 3d. per bushel for wheat to be sold as flour oversea. That could only be done by increasing the prices of bran and pollard locally, or by increasing the price of flour for export, which flour would then be unsaleable abroad. Thus the two Ministers are between two stools. I am concerned, first of all, with the price of bread—bread being the staff of life. I am not going to ask the general community of this State to continue to suffer, by paying a high price for bread, in order to enable any section of the community, be that section poultry farmers or anything else, to get their commodity at a price—

The Attorney General: But do you not admit the economic principle?

Mr. SCADDAN: I quite recognise the economic principle; but can the Attorney General square his statement with that of his colleague? I wish the Attorney General to explain to me how Western Australia can produce cheaper bran and pollard and at the same time sell flour abroad in competition with the world if, as his colleague the Colonial Secretary says, the price of wheat is to be increased to the local miller? Unless we export flour in greater quantities than at present, we shall be importing more bran and pollard. But we cannot increase our output of bran and pollard, and at the same time increase the price of wheat to the local miller, unless one of two things be done—either charge higher prices for bran and pollard, or charge a higher price for bread.

The Attorney General: Your argument does not take into consideration war conditions.

Mr. SCADDAN: I have been endeavouring to take war conditions into consideration all along. The difficulty in which the hon. gentleman finds himself is one he cannot get out of. His colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, will have to tell the Attorney General and the Colonial Secretary that they cannot both obtain what they desire. However, I wish to urge again that the consumers are entitled to some consideration, and that while we have wheat here being destroyed by mice and in other ways, wheat that cannot possibly be shipped later on, the consumers ought not to be called upon to pay for a dear loaf. Why in the name of fortune should they, if the pool can afford to lose thousands and thousands of bushels on the wharves and in the country? Why could not the board just as well lose the equivalent by giving the consumer an advantage in allowing the wheat to be gristed into flour? But our friends opposite say, "No; we must always consider this matter from the standpoint of conservative interests; let the wheat be destroyed by mice, let it rot on the wharves and at the sidings; but do not interfere with the price of bread to the consumer." If the wheat cannot be exported either as wheat or flour, surely the community are entitled to a loaf at a reasonable price. For, it is the community themselves have inflicted this hardship upon themselves, by providing that they should pay for bread from wheat gristed at 4s. 9d. per bushel when, if they had refrained from so acting as the community, they might have got bread from wheat gristed at 2s. to 2s. 6d. per bushel. Had this scheme not been in operation, wheat might have been sold at 2s. per bushel, and in many cases farmers, particularly those not fortunately situated, would not have been able to sell their wheat at all. The miller would have got the wheat at 2s. or 2s. 6d., and the general community would have got bread on the basis of wheat at 2s. or 2s. 6d. per bushel. The general community, however, have said, "We must save the interests of the farmer." I will at once admit that the community acted as they did not merely in the interests of the farmer but in the interests of themselves and of the trade and commerce of Australia. Still, what justification is there for a Minister to assert that because the community, by their

action, had increased the London parity for the farmer from 2s. to 5s. 3d., the community should pay for a loaf a price based on that 5s. 3d. parity? Why should the general community be so treated in a matter of this nature? And why should a Minister state that there had been an attempt to bribe the metropolitan community at the expense of the farmer? As a matter of fact, the consuming public of Australia, through their Executives, have absolutely inflicted on themselves a hardship in the interests of the farmer, and the farmer should have fairness enough to recognise that fact.

The Attorney General: Who do you say made that assertion about an attempt to bribe?

Mr. SCADDAN: The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Colebatch. Many hon. members, as well as the general public, view the scheme as being, largely, just a means of enabling advances to be made; and with that they regard the problem as solved. The consuming public of Australia have been long suffering in this matter, but I doubt whether they will continue to suffer for another season if wheat is to continue to be wasted at sidings in the country and destroyed and lost at the ports. I say they will refuse to suffer.

The Attorney General: What do you say should be done with the wheat?

Mr. SCADDAN: In the interests of the consumer, the wheat should be made available to the miller at the price which the board are advancing to the farmer.

The Attorney General: Would you compel the farmer to sell his wheat at 2s. 6d. per bushel?

Mr. SCADDAN: I am not asking the farmer to sell at any price. No appreciation has been expressed by the farmer, so far, of the action of the Federal and State Executives. All that the papers have published from the farmer has been in the nature of complaint. I urge that in view of the existing conditions, in view of the tremendous quantity of wheat stacked in Australia and going to waste, in view of the tremendous quantity of wheat that will be reaped this harvest, it is up to the wheat board to consider the advisability of allowing the millers to have the wheat—now that we are controlling the price of bread—at the

price the board are advancing to the farmer. In regard to the risk of the market continuing, there is just a possibility that the London parity will not remain so high. The hon. member will not see my point of view. The last harvest was a record for the farmers of Western Australia. There was more money actually circulated among the farming community last season as a result of that board being in existence than ever previously in the history of Western Australian farming. And yet the local miller is being charged 4s. 9d. a bushel for gristing wheat while the farmer has been given only 3s. 6d. I say the general community is not going to continue to put up with that. The farmers should be prepared to give the general community an opportunity of getting a cheaper loaf.

Mr. Willmott interjected.

Mr. SCADDAN: The hon. member ought to know, but does he know the amount we have added to the national debt in order to make the advances which have been made to farmers?

Member: Do you know?

Mr. SCADDAN: The hon. member is a representative of the farmers and he should know. I know it is somewhere about a million of money. The hon. member is a farmers' representative, but all he is worrying about is the matter of advances to farmers. He says, "Give us something." It doesn't matter where it comes from.

Mr. Harrison: Did not the British Government make that advance?

Mr. SCADDAN: Yes, on the security of the whole of Australia, to the extent of about 11 million pounds.

Member: Is not the farmer a member of the general community?

Mr. SCADDAN: Yes; but, as has been pointed out, the security is being destroyed. That advance was made on the assumption that our wheat would be put on the market at market value. If it is not put on the market the general community will lose. Notwithstanding the fact that the general community has made this advance to the farmer, we have still to pay for a dear loaf. It is not a fair proposition to ask the general community to do this in the interests of the farmer, and for the farmer to be continually grumbling.

The Minister for Railways: The money advanced to the farmer has all gone into circulation.

Mr. SCADDAN: Of course it has. Nobody carries money about in his pockets; we are all putting money into circulation every day. I am not dealing with that aspect, but am urging that it is unfair that the general community should be compelled to pay for bread, the wheat for which cost 4s. 9d. a bushel, while the advances made to the farmers in respect to that wheat amount to only 3s. 6d.

Mr. Harrison interjected.

Mr. SCADDAN: The hon. member is now trying to side track. It is well known that the Government reduced fertiliser rates, and that the firms producing fertilisers immediately pocketed the difference. It was always the same. One can go to the Government and ask for any concession and the middle man will pocket the difference. I maintain that previously to the reduction of freight an exorbitant profit was being made by the manufacturers of the fertilisers. When the freights were reduced the manufacturer pocketed the difference. Now the farmer is complaining that the general community should contribute something more, and I assert that the general community has now to pay the extra amount which the manufacturers are pocketing. I am not urging that the farmer should receive anything less for his produce than he is entitled to. I am trying to point out that a good deal more money was circulated among the farming community as a result of the last harvest than ever previously in the history of farming in this State, yet every farmer is crying poverty. The explanation is that the farmers are being fleeced by private enterprise and they will wake up to the fact some day. The general community has to find the money, and I am urging that the general community is not prepared to continue to assist private enterprise in fleecing the community. I want the general community to understand that the consumer has enabled the farmer to obtain the London parity for his wheat. I would ask the Minister how he is to get over his difficulty? On the one hand his colleague, the Attorney General, puts the proposition that we must reduce the price of bran and pollard to the poultry farmers. He

promised that. How can he do that and at the same time meet the wishes of his colleague the Colonial Secretary, who desires that we shall export flour in competition with the rest of the world. I am asking the Minister this in the interests of the general community, the people who have to pay. We must consider the position. I do not think the general community is prepared to sit down much longer and permit our millers to be charged 4s. 9d. per bushel for wheat for gristing while the farmers receive only 3s. 6d.

Member: The farmer has given his wheat.

Mr. SCADDAN: And the State Government have guaranteed any loss in connection with the wheat in the pool.

The Minister for Railways: Will there be a loss?

Mr. SCADDAN: I hope not, but the longer the war lasts the greater the possibility of loss.

Mr. Green: He said so himself; he said there are weevils in it.

Mr. SCADDAN: I will tell the member why I think the longer the war lasts the greater the possibility of loss. Only half of last year's harvest has left the shores of Western Australia. We are now about to start on another harvest where we started last year, but we have not one harvest only to deal with, but one and a-half. Next year, if the war continues so long, the same thing will be repeated. What is to be the position then when we have two harvests to deal with? The shipment of our wheat is going to be a difficult problem and increasingly difficult in the future; and who is carrying the responsibility?

Member: The farmer?

Mr. SCADDAN: The farmer is not. He has been already advanced more money than ever in the history of farming in this State. The wheat is being eaten up by weevils and mice, and is being lost on our wharves where it is awaiting shipment—and yet the general community have to pay for a dear loaf. I think the farmer might, in the interests of the rest of the community, agree that the local miller should get his wheat at the same price as the farmer has himself received for it. The farmers' attitude in this matter is similar to that of the man who approached

the Industries Assistance Board, and said, "I want so many pounds." He took this advance, imagining that he was being paid wages, while all the time it was a loan, and a loan which the general community has to pay. I assert that this problem is more difficult than the Minister himself even realises. We have already accepted a liability for advances to farmers to the extent of 11 million pounds. We have another harvest coming in, and not a penny for it. We will have to obtain something like 30 millions more to add to the 11 millions. And so it will go on each year the war continues. If we do not get rid of the last harvest the position will become more and more difficult.

The Attorney General: What is your remedy?

Mr. SCADDAN: I am trying to urge that in view of the fact that the general community is carrying a liability which will amount to 30 millions, it is a fair proposition that the farmer should, in the interests of the general community, agree that the miller may have his wheat at the price which has been advanced to the farmer for it.

The Minister for Railways: Your Government fixed the price.

Mr. SCADDAN: We did nothing of the kind. It was the board which fixed the price, a board representative of the whole of Australia and the Federal Government with it. The hon. member's colleague said we did something which was in the nature of a bribe, that we bribed the metropolitan electorates because we reduced the price to 4s. 9d. The Federal Government provided transports and charged the pool less than the market rate for it. Wheat shipped in Federal transports at rates of freight below those actually ruling was put in on the London parity of 4s. 6d. in the same way as other wheat shipped in privately-owned vessels at the rates of freight actually ruling. Here is the general community inflicting a hardship upon itself, and yet the farmers say we are robbing them—at least their representative, Hon. H. P. Colebatch, says so. We are told that we are bribing the metropolitan electorates at the expense of the farmer. The whole thing was done in the interests of the State.

The Attorney General: What has that to do with the Bill?

Mr. SCADDAN: This is a matter in which Parliament is lending on behalf of the general community, and making the continuance of the arrangement with the pool a part of our statutes. All I am urging is that in view of this the general community may be considered in the question of the price.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [9.33]: Like the leader of the Opposition I realise that this Bill is a very important one. I cannot go to the length that he would have us go, however, and say that we should sacrifice our wheat because it was being given away.

Mr. Scaddan: That is not fair. I said, at the price that is being advanced on it.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member made the statement that a considerable amount of wheat is going to waste on the wharves at Fremantle and also in the country.

Mr. Scaddan: That is so.

Mr. THOMSON: And because this is going to waste the hon. member says we should reduce the price of the wheat.

Mr. Willmott: In any other business they would sky the price to make up for the loss.

Mr. THOMSON: I want to impress upon hon. members, who say that they are representing the consumers, that I have the privilege of representing not only the consumers, but the producer. Unless the producer is protected and gets a decent price for his products, all the railways we have built in the country and in the agricultural districts as well will become depleted and the people will not remain on their holdings.

Mr. Scaddan: The farmers did not get 4s. 9d.

Mr. THOMSON: I admit that. We have to pay the interest on the money that has been advanced. It is all very fine to hear about the consumer paying the whole of this, but it is the farmers who have to pay the interest on this money, as well as pay the freights to the shipper. The farmers are paying the whole of the cost, and the consuming public is not paying it at all. The charges are being deducted from the price that is being given for the wheat.

Mr. Scaddan: Is that different from what has always been?

Mr. THOMSON: I am in favour of the pool.

Mr. Angwin: How long since?

Mr. THOMSON: When the leader of the Opposition said that the farming community was not grateful he made an incorrect statement. There may be a few who disagree, but the great bulk of the producers of Western Australia is pleased that the Commonwealth Government created the wheat pool.

Mr. Scaddan: Did not the Farmers' and Settlers' Association recently in Melbourne carry a motion against the continuation of the pool, and these people were represented?

Mr. THOMSON: I am not dealing with the farmers in the Eastern States but with those in my own district.

Mr. Angwin: Were you not present at a meeting at Katanning which condemned it at the start?

Mr. THOMSON: That shows how much the hon. member knows. I was not present.

Mr. Scaddan: The meeting was held.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, a meeting was held.

Mr. Griffiths: Many meetings were held.

Mr. THOMSON: And some of the settlers were so misguided as to pass a resolution to the effect that wheat was being taken from them.

Mr. Scaddan: That proves that what I say is correct.

Mr. THOMSON: Not necessarily so. They had their experience, and they realised that under the abnormal conditions we have to face to-day it was the only possible solution of the difficulty.

Mr. Scaddan: Where have they had a meeting affirming it?

Mr. THOMSON: In drawing up the agreement for the handling of the wheat for next year I consider that the greatest care should be exercised, and that the members of this House should be consulted before the arrangements are made. That is one reason why the farming community disagreed with some of the actions of the late Government. The trouble was that the whole matter was fixed up, and the men who were most vitally and directly interested in the matter of wheat were not consulted at all. They were told that they would have to sell their wheat at a given price and that so much would be given to them in return.

Mr. Scaddan: That is not correct.

Mr. THOMSON: It is correct. I had the honour of putting up a fight on behalf of the farmers in connection with the wheat rebate.

Mr. Scaddan: That was not a fight.

Mr. THOMSON: It had some good effect at any rate. I admit that the late Minister for Lands entered into the agreement with the best of intentions, but he was going to make the shippers or brokers a present of £250,000. It was only after the matter was ventilated in the House that the late Premier gave a definite undertaking that this money would go into the general pool, and it was only by discussing this matter that we were able to arrive at a satisfactory solution. I would point out to the House that last year we had two agreements, one with the general agents and one with the millers. While I am not opposed to any farmer getting a half-penny or 1d. a bushel more for his wheat than his neighbour, I do say that where we have a general pool no farmer should have an advantage over another. Last season we found that the general agents were offering a certain price, and that the millers' representatives came along and said, "We will give you a half-penny or a penny a bushel more for the same class of wheat," and the millers were able to do it. That should not exist in any agreement, and the members of the House should be consulted before such an agreement is entered into by the Government of Western Australia.

Mr. Scaddan: What nonsense. It is impossible to do that.

Mr. THOMSON: I am simply voicing my views.

Mr. Scaddan: What a nice time one would have sitting down here going through all that.

Mr. THOMSON: Possibly the goldfields representatives would not be interested.

Mr. Munsie: It is the goldfields public which has to pay.

Mr. THOMSON: The goldfields reap a distinct benefit by having a large farming community in Western Australia.

Mr. Munsie: They have not reaped much benefit out of the pool.

Mr. THOMSON: If we had had to import our wheat as had to be done last year, the goldfields public would probably have to pay a much higher price than they would be called upon to pay in the future. If there

is one lesson which this war has taught Australia and the world, it is that a country which is not self-contained is not going to last very long.

Mr. Scaddan: What nonsense.

Mr. THOMSON: Germany is practically self-contained and is able to put up a strong fight against the Allies. In any agreement which is entered into, both the miller and the other agents should be on the same basis. We require to see if we can minimise the cost of handling wheat down to the lowest possible point. I recognise that the Bill is the only means by which Western Australia can possibly handle its wheat during the coming season. We have a large quantity in hand and we have the new season's crop coming in very soon.

Mr. Scaddan: Where are we going to get the money out of which to make the advances?

Mr. THOMSON: If we cannot make the advances to the farmer, and if the wheat will rot in the fields, then we shall have our country districts depopulated.

Mr. Scaddan: Where are we going to get the money from?

Mr. THOMSON: I presume that the Minister will discuss this matter with the Federal Government. I trust that a solution will be found so far as the finances are concerned. We must find the money and we must keep our producers on the land. If we cannot do this, we might as well close up. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Mitchell, Northam—in reply) [9.43]: I would like to explain—

Mr. Angwin: That you are a socialist at last, for this Bill is pure socialism.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: With regard to the price charged to the millers. The leader of the Opposition has been at pains to make the country believe that the price of wheat ought to be reduced in order that the price of bread might be cheapened. He sought to cast blame on everyone but himself.

Mr. Scaddan: I am not casting any blame.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would be unfair to sell wheat to the miller at less than its London value. The wheat was commandeered and the farmer was ordered

to put his wheat into the pool. He did not request that this should be done, but the Government, with the Federal Government, in their wisdom determined that this was the only way to handle the wheat in order to conserve the interests of the farmer and the rest of the people in Australia. Having determined upon that they had a responsibility to the farmer whose wheat they had taken. They were compelling the farmer to come in. The position then is, that they must get for the wheat what it is worth on the London market.

Mr. Scaddan: Not if a fictitious London parity is set up.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. I am not going to accuse the Prime Minister of setting up a fictitious value.

Mr. Scaddan: He did.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There are many farmers who would have been perfectly willing to sell their wheat to the millers at 4s. 9d. If the farmers in an ordinary season had got 4s. 3d. the millers would have received the wheat at an average of about 4s. 9d. Let me point out that it would take about 1s. 2d. a bushel to vary the price of bread a farthing per lb.

Mr. Scaddan: If that is correct, how does it come about that the price of bread has been raised so much?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Federal Government fixed the price. The member for Beverley referred to the crops. I have been a good deal about the country and it has been my good fortune to see particularly good crops, while the reports of the inspectors have, on the whole, been very favourable. It is true that in some parts of the Great Southern the crops are not looking quite so well, but they are much later there than in other parts of the State. I think we shall have much better than an 8-bushel average; I think it will be 12 bushels. That, of course, does not alter the amount of the advance a farmer hopes to get. I do not know what the advance will be next year, but I know that, whatever the average may be, the people will want all that the farmer can get against the wheat.

Mr. Scaddan: Where are you going to get it from?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We may get it from the source from which it

came last year. A great deal of this money, the 16 millions, came from London, as a result of the sales. There are 26 millions in circulation as the result of the work of the Australian farmer last year. I was surprised to hear the speech of the leader of the Opposition to-night. It showed a want of appreciation of the true position. We will get the money as we got it last year and it will come from the people in London who want our wheat. If the Dardanelles were opened to-morrow not a bushel of wheat would come out until after March next. No one knows the quantity of Russian wheat stored there.

Mr. Scaddan: There are different estimates.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Australian Wheat Board have no information on the subject.

Mr. Scaddan: The fact remains that if the Dardanelles were opened, the price would be affected.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; everything points to a better price for Australian wheat, and I am very sorry that we have not much more for export. We cannot have too much wheat. The world's crop looks like being 20 per cent. less than last year's harvest and the people must have bread. I am glad to find that the Bill has been so well received by hon. members and I hope that when it is in Committee, attention will be paid to the clauses.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

TEMPORARY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to announce that I have appointed the members for Kimberley and Fremantle as temporary Chairmen of Committees.

House adjourned at 9.53 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 1st November, 1916.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Department of Lands and Surveys, report for year ended 30th June, 1916. 2, Public Service Commissioner's report for year ended 30th June, 1916, and Public Service List.

NOTICE OF MOTION—WHEAT MARKETING BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.39]: I give notice that at the next sitting of the House it is my intention to move that so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to permit the Wheat Marketing Bill to pass through all its stages at one sitting. The Government consider it necessary that the Bill should be passed during the present week. Copies of the Bill will be available, and will be circulated, this afternoon. If hon. members, after seeing the Bill, have any objection to its passing to-morrow, it will not be pressed; but the Government, being of opinion that the measure is not a controversial Bill in any sense, desire that it should be passed during the present week.

BILL—BETTING SUPPRESSION.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary, and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Execution of Instruments.
 - 2, Zoological Gardens Act Amendment.
- Transmitted to the Assembly.